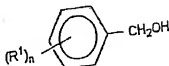


**AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS****Claim 1 (currently amended)**

A process for the preparation of a salt of an  $\omega$ -benzyl ester of an amino dicarboxylic acid, comprising A) reacting the amino dicarboxylic acid with a benzyl alcohol derivative of the formula



wherein ~~R<sup>1</sup> is hydrogen or~~ is individually selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>4</sub> alkyl, C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>4</sub> alkoxy and halogen and n is 1 or 3, in the presence of an alkanesulfonic acid catalyst with a molar ratio of at least one mole of catalyst per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid of an alkanesulfonic acid, B) optionally in the presence of a solvent to obtain a salt thereof and optionally reacting the salt with a base to obtain the free form thereof.

**Claim 2 (previously presented)**

The process of Claim 1, wherein the amino dicarboxylic acid is an  $\alpha$ -amino carboxylic acid carrying another carboxyl group attached to a carbon other than that in the  $\alpha$  position.

**Claim 3 (previously presented)**

The process of Claim 2, wherein the amino dicarboxylic acid is glutamic acid or aspartic acid.

**Claim 4 (previously presented)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the alcohol of formula (I) is benzyl alcohol.

**Claim 5 (currently amended)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature of the A) reaction is less than or equal to 80°C.

**Claim 6 (previously presented)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the benzyl alcohol or its derivative of formula (I) is used in an amount of 1.2 to 3 mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

**Claim 7 (previously presented)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the alkanesulfonic acid is methanesulfonic acid.

**Claim 8 (previously presented)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the amount of alkanesulfonic acid used is 1.01 to 2 mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

**Claim 9 (currently amended)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the solvent of the A) reaction is selected from the group consisting of aliphatic and aromatic and halogenated and nonhalogenated hydrocarbons.

**Claim 10 (previously presented)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the  $\omega$ -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid is obtained in the free form by bringing the alkanesulfonate of the  $\omega$ -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid into contact with an organic or inorganic base.

**Claim 11 (previously presented)**

The process of Claim 10, wherein the base is used in an amount sufficient to reach the isoelectric point of the ester to be obtained.

**Claim 12 (previously presented)**

The process of Claim 10 wherein the base is an aqueous ammonia solution.

**Claim 13 (currently amended)**

The process of claim 1 wherein the salt ~~alkanesulfonate of the  $\omega$ -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid~~ is crystallized before being converted to the free  $\omega$ -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

**Claim 14** (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein a solvent/water azeotrope is distilled off the A) reaction at a temperature of less than 80°C.

**Claim 15** (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the salt ~~alkanesulfonate of the  $\alpha$ -benzyl ester of the amino-dicarboxylic acid~~ is isolated before being brought into contact with the base.

**Claim 16** (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the ~~alkanesulfonate of the  $\alpha$ -benzyl ester of the amino-dicarboxylic acid~~ salt is not isolated from the medium before this ester is released.

**Claim 17** (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the salt ~~alkanesulfonate of the  $\alpha$ -benzyl ester to be converted to the free ester~~ is dissolved in water.

**Claim 18** (previously presented)

The process of claim 17 wherein a solvent for the benzyl alcohol derivative is added with the water or after the introduction of water.

**Claim 19** (currently amended)

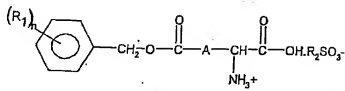
The process of claim 1 wherein, after having reached the pH of the isoelectric point of the A) reaction, the medium is heated.

**Claim 20** (cancelled)

20

**Claim 21** (previously presented)

Alkanesulfonate having the formula



wherein R<sup>1</sup> is hydrogen or is individually selected from the group consisting of C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>4</sub> alkyl, C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>4</sub> alkoxy and halogen, A is selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic, cycloaliphatic, aryl, araliphatic or heterocyclic and R<sup>2</sup> is alkane residue of the alkanesulfonic acid.

21

**Claim 22** (previously presented)

An alkanesulfonate of claim 21 wherein it is  $\gamma$ -benzyl glutamate methanesulfonate or  $\beta$ -benzyl aspartate methane sulfonate.